

FROM TRANSIENT TO DURABLE

EXPLORING THE EMOTIONAL VALUE OF OBSOLETE OBJECTS

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ABSTRACT

Many branded products, which were once common and cheap everyday commodities when initially produced, eventually become collectibles after being obsolete perhaps for years or even decades. A strong emotional value is often ascribed to these rediscovered products or brands by their collectors. In this paper, we explore a Finnish example of this phenomenon, whereby obsolete plastic tableware (produced by *Sarvis* in particular) which was very popular in 1960s and 1970s, has become increasingly collectible. Focusing on this particular case, this paper relies on a combination of Rubbish Theory (Thompson, 1979) and Memory Retrieval - Nostalgic Product Experience Model (Xue and Woolley, 2011) as a theoretical framework and uses qualitative data collected through ten semi-structured in-depth interviews with both collectors and ordinary consumers (non-collectors of plastic tableware) to address three questions: (1) why once mundane objects become collectibles, (2) how this particular emotional value is attached to such objects and (3) how this form of emotional value might be usefully transferred to new design outcomes, both in the particular case of Finnish tableware design as well as in a more general context. In conclusion, it is argued that memory formed during an individual's critical developmental period (e.g. childhood) together with nostalgic experience, play a significant role in the creation of such emotional value and pave the way for nostalgia as a contemporary design focus.

Keywords: Emotional Value, Memory, Nostalgia, Rubbish Theory, Finnish Plastic Tableware.

INTRODUCTION

The role of emotion has long been recognized as a crucial concern of design research and practice and the creation of emotional value for products and brands has become one of the key tasks of contemporary designers (e.g. Desmet, Overbeeke & Tax, 2001; Desmet 2002; Norman, 2004). Although practitioners are not unfamiliar with the design potential of emotions and some may well consider that designers have always dealt intuitively with emotions, more design knowledge on emotion, plus inspirational methods for designing for added emotional value are needed.

One intriguing phenomenon is that some products, usually branded, were initially produced as common and highly accessible utilitarian commodities, but after being discarded by the owners perhaps after many years of regular use, are then rediscovered and valued as collectibles. It is common to find that the collectors of these rediscovered products form very strong emotional bonds with them and/or their associated brands. They often spend considerable time and effort locating more objects, displaying and taking care of them as a personal collection. It is possible that this increasingly widespread phenomenon may provide design researchers with a valuable territory to explore and learn from. Similar cases have been found in many different cultures, including Finland where specific obsolete plastic cups and plates are becoming increasingly collectible. The most popular items are those introduced during the 1960s and 1970s by *Sarvis*, a once successful Finnish brand for plastic household products. Focusing on this case, this paper combines the Rubbish Theory (Thompson, 1979) and Memory Retrieval - Nostalgic Product Experience Model (Xue and Woolley, 2011)

as a theoretical framework and uses qualitative data collected through ten in-depth interviews with both the collectors and ordinary consumers (non-collectors of plastic tableware) to address three questions: (1) Why once mundane objects become collectibles, (2) how this particular form of emotional value becomes attached to such objects and (3) how it might be usefully transferred to new design outcomes in this particular case of Finnish tableware design as well as in a more general context..

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

RUBBISH THEORY

Rubbish Theory developed by Thompson (1979) provides a general framework for understanding how the value and meaning of objects change over time. He claims that there are three cultural categories that one object (e.g. product, brand or service) may belong to. The first category is the *Transient* objects which have steadily decreasing value and finite life spans, such as ordinary tables, chairs or cups. These objects are usually created to fulfill specific consumer tasks and are rarely intended for lifetime use. The second category is the *Durable* object which has steadily increasing value and infinite life spans (ideally), such as investment jewelry. They are often highly visible in human societies and can be considered a part of treasure or heritage of the culture within which they originated. Given the countless examples of transient objects becoming durable ones, Thompson raised the question of how such transfer actually happens. He argues that a direct transfer from transient to durable is impossible, but can be achieved through a third category *Rubbish*, which serves as the key bridge between the two.

Rubbish objects are invisible and no longer used, loved or cared for. Parsons (2008: 391) states that rubbish objects might “linger on the periphery of our lives, in the back of the drawer, bottom of the wardrobe or cupboard, corner of the garage or garden shed gathering dust”, but they are also the “objects which embody a significant amount of potential for re-emergence through processes of recycling, re-use and re-absorption into everyday lives.” Therefore, Rubbish is considered “the zone of transformation where the unregarded detritus of commodity is turned into personal culture, and can rise again through the

system into public culture and high market value” (Pearce, 1998: 93).



Figure 1. Cultural categories of objects and possible transfers between them (adapted from Thompson, 1979: 10).

Thompson (2003: 322) himself describes the whole transfer process from Transient to Durable thus: “A Transient object, decreasing in value with time and use, eventually sinks into Rubbish—a timeless and valueless limbo. In an ideal world it would then disappear in a small cloud of dust but often this does not happen, and it lingers on, unnoticed and unloved, until perhaps one day it is discovered by some creative and upwardly mobile individual and successfully transferred to the Durable category.”

MEMORY RETRIEVAL - NOSTALGIC PRODUCT EXPERIENCE MODEL

From a sociological perspective (macro level), the Rubbish Theory describes how the value and meaning of objects change over time, but it does not clearly state what factors may influence the transfer from Transient to Durable. This leaves researchers with an unclear area to contribute to. Parsons (2008) analyses three sets of value creation practices (finding, displaying and re-using objects) that make the transfer from Rubbish to Durable possible. He argues that “each of these sets of practices change the way people view an object moving it from being seen as a ‘rubbish object’ of no value to a ‘durable object’ of increasing value” (Parsons, 2008: 392). Likewise, we find in the current study that some connections with memory and nostalgia may also support the Rubbish Theory from a psychological point of view (micro level).

The concept of nostalgia can be seen as both a socio-cultural phenomenon and a subjective experience, which in this paper, we discuss primarily in terms of the latter. Despite causing some minor negative

responses (e.g. the feeling of loss), nostalgia as a fundamental and complex human experience is “a positively toned evocation of a lived past ... infused with imputations of past beauty, pleasure, joy, satisfaction, goodness, happiness, love...” (Davis, 1979: 18).

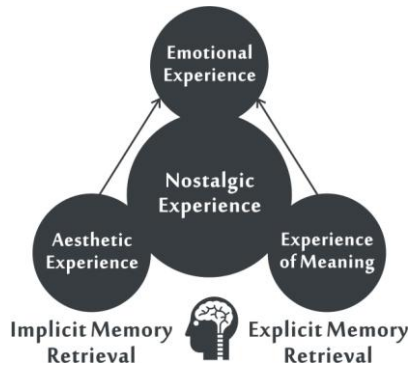


Figure 2. Memory Retrieval - Nostalgic Product Experience Model (Xue and Woolley, 2011)

In a previous paper, the authors (2011) established a Memory Retrieval - Nostalgic Product Experience Model, based on the framework of product experience (Desmet and Hekkert, 2007). This model examined three types of nostalgic experience that may be evoked by an interaction with artifacts and highlights the relationship between nostalgic experience and memory retrieval. First of all, nostalgia, as an experience of meaning, often accompanies symbol recognition and storytelling which depends on explicit memory retrieval – a “conscious recollection of previous experiences” (Schacter 1992: 559). Secondly, nostalgia, as aesthetic experience, may manifest as a strong aesthetic preference or liking for one object and the formation of this preference is considered to be a result of the joint actions of both critical period and mere exposure (Holbrook and Schindler, 2003). It is understood that there is often a critical period, the time in a person’s life that is most influential (e.g. childhood and adolescence), in the development of a person’s tastes or preferences for products (Holbrook, 1993; Schindler and Holbrook, 2003). Meanwhile, the exposure theory suggests that the feeling of liking an object increases with repeated exposure (Zajonc, 1968; Bornstein, 1989) and this effect has been interpreted as an ‘implicit memory phenomenon’ (i.e. unintentional and unconscious recall) by many psychologists (Schacter, 1987; Seamon et al., 1995; Squire, 1992). Thus the aesthetic level of nostalgic experience is believed to

be a result of the retrieval of implicit memory formed during one’s critical formative development. Finally, the positive nature of nostalgia previously mentioned involves two types of nostalgic experience, both of which are able to attain an emotional level of nostalgic experience, which is predominantly positive.

In terms of products, brands and services, it is clear that not all of them can equally evoke this particular emotional value and become durable objects after being rubbish. They need the potential, and such potential is actually something well hidden in people’s minds and memories. Notably, such expressions as “Oh, I used to have one of these when I was ...”, “I remember ...”, “Aren’t they just beautiful...” are often associated with the moment when a person is creating certain emotional value or nostalgic bond for an obsolete object. Thus, it is quite obvious that memory retrieval and nostalgic experience exert important influence on the people who may potentially effect the transfer from Rubbish to Durable. If memories and nostalgia are so important in this context, perhaps the question of how such memories of rubbish are formed should be addressed. A more detailed discussion on this issue is in the concluding section of this paper.

A CASE FROM FINLAND: SARVIS PLASTIC TABLEWARE

This research was initially intended to develop a general understanding of the recent plastic tableware collecting phenomenon in Finland, rather than as a particular case study of Sarvis. However, it was quickly understood that Sarvis is almost the synonym of classic Finnish plastic tableware from the 1960s and 1970s; its products are the most collected items of plastic objects and plastic tableware produced by other manufactures is very much in a collecting minority. Therefore this study may also be considered as a case study of Sarvis’ transfer to Durable after being “Rubbish” for more than two decades.

A SHORT HISTORY OF SARVIS

Founded in 1921, Sarvis was Finland’s first plastic products manufacturer. With the booming of the plastics industry after the Second World War, Sarvis became increasingly popular. In the early 1960s, millions of Sarvis household products were sold each year in Finland, a country with only 4.5 million

population at the time. Following the emergence of a new 'design' lifestyle in Finland, the late 1960s to 1970s turned out to be the golden age of Sarvis products, especially in relation to its plastic tableware (Koivuniemi and Tarna, 2004). During this period the two most influential ranges of plastic tableware in Finland – "Katrilli" designed by Tauno Tarna in 1969 and "Pitopöytä (Easy Day)" by Tarna's teacher Kaj Franck in 1976 – were introduced by Sarvis. Following the international oil crisis in 1973 and the emergence of environmental concerns regarding plastic material effectively halted the ever-increasing development of the plastics industry and Sarvis faced a major decline in the late 1970s (Jokinen, 2001). In 1985, Sarvis was sold to Hammarplast (a Swedish company), then it was sold and bought many times among different Finnish and Swedish companies (Hackman, Plastumgruppen AB), whilst the most important machinery and moulds for Sarvis products were moved to Sweden and the Sarvis factories in Finland were all closed in the 1990s. Sarvis has become increasingly invisible in the Finnish market since the 1980s until 5 or 6 years ago when the collectors of Sarvis tableware first appeared (Valtonen, 2006).

METHOD

The basic information regarding this phenomenon was gathered initially through magazines, newspapers and internet searches in the Finnish language. It was found that many collectors' often display their collections, especially newly found items, on their blogs. Subsequently through email contact, we were able to identify five collectors who were living in Finland and willing to participate in this study. Male collectors of plastic tableware were extremely rare. It was consistent with the finding of Csikszentmihalyi's study (1981) that tableware, to a great extent, is considered part of the "toolkit" of housework and therefore potentially more favored by women to preserve memories, than men (although changing social attitudes during the period of Sarvis manufacture and the subsequent collecting period may well affect this). All five collectors were female and were born in 1968, 1973, 1978, 1978, 1982 respectively, grew up in Finland, were married and had at least one child. In order to directly compare collectors and ordinary consumers and to explore the design opportunities for more general market

segmentation, five ordinary Finnish consumers with similar demographic profiles (females; born in 1968, 1968, 1973, 1976, 1979; upbringing in Finland, married and with children) were also invited to participate in the study. In addition, pictures of the most popular Sarvis tableware were shown to the participants at the end of the interviews in order to find out which items they remembered and how they would react to those old products and the brand. As a reward for their contributions, each of the interviewees received two sets of newly launched plastic cups, which were freely provided by *Orthex* (a major Finnish plastic product manufacturer).

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Ten semi-structured in-depth interviews (five with collectors and five with ordinary Finnish consumers) were conducted from September to November 2011. Most of the interviews were conducted in the interviewees' home kitchen so that we could view their collections and kitchen environments directly and holistically. Two interviews took place in the office environment and one was via telephone. Five interviews were in Finnish and five mainly in English, but Finnish was allowed at any point in these interviews because the Finnish author of this paper also presented as the second interviewer.

A set of interview themes and questions was prepared before the interviews. The themes were related to the collecting hobby, the current practices related to it and the plastic tableware. Participants were, for example, asked about their background, how they started their collecting hobby, what makes an object important to them and what is their favorite object and why. The goal was to understand the motivation the collectors had for collecting plastic tableware, what they do with their collections and how they view the history of the collected objects. The ordinary consumers were asked to describe what kind of dishes they use and how they view plastic as a material in kitchen.

The whole data analysis process included two phases: initial open coding and focused coding. During the first phase, the interview transcripts were coded thoroughly in order to draw ideas and themes out of the raw data more comprehensively and also to provide a clearer structure for the focused coding

phase. The data was then re-examined in a much more focused way to identify possible answers to the original research questions, as well as a deeper understanding of any closely related issues or thoughts that emerged from the initial coding.

RESULTS

The analysis of data revealed that the emotional value explored in this case, can be identified largely as a result of nostalgic bonding. The data reveals a great deal of information regarding the practices through which the emotional value between collectors and their collections was created and enhanced, what collectors experience during these practices and how memories or past experiences associated with the objects influence their collecting behaviors.

THE COLLECTORS

The collectors were very eager to talk about the tableware they collect and the collections appeared to play an important role in their lives. Next, the different dimensions of the collecting behavior and the value creation are described.

“Hunting”: A Casual, Lovely and Surprising Practice in the Flea Markets

Collectors' shopping is a sort of “treasure hunt, an adventure, a quest and a delight” (Belk 1995: 72). To the collectors in this study, the flea market is the most frequently mentioned “hunting ground”, where their collecting behavior often started and continued. They have acquired the habit of regularly searching different flea markets and second-hand shops and the “hunting” process is casual, without pressure, without very specific goals, in the hope of finding plastic dishes that can capture their hearts.

“Usually it happens to me, I see something nice, it just comes into my head, I want to have those, and it was like that in a flea market.”

“This is so random, if I see something nice... (I will just buy it)”

Searching for collectibles is as important as their possession, sometimes even more so, especially at the moment when a desired item is discovered unexpectedly. For example, when asked what she

would feel if she has suddenly managed to gather all the dishes she desires, one collector said:

“Sad! ... Because it's great when you go to flea market you never know what you are going to find. But if I had them all, there will be no surprise coming any more ... It would be terrible to have them all, because the one right thing for collecting is looking for new ones, that's a part of it ... the process.”

Meanwhile, the experience of getting something for (almost) nothing during the flea market hunting seems to be very enjoyable to the collectors.

“People don't value plastic much. People don't know the value of it. For example this one (a Sarvis Kartilli cup), I found, it was in the box marked “take it if you want”. No price (laughter)! That was nice, so I always want to find good price items.”

Showing: Photos on the Blogs

None of the collectors interviewed stated that they would intentionally show their collections frequently to others and they said that most of their friends and relatives usually do not care about their collections. But they did take pictures of the cups, plates and containers they collected, posted them on their blogs and wrote often sentimental words to express their feelings for them. Through such blogs, was exactly the way we found these collectors and also an important way for themselves to gather relevant information, such as which flea markets might be good places to find more collectible plastic tableware. Therefore, even though they did not admit this straightforwardly, we supposed that by displaying their collections through internet blogs, they hope to share similar memories with others or discuss their common nostalgic bond. Display is thus a potentially important practice which reinforces the nostalgic bond, at the same time it is also a crucial way to make this personal attached emotional value become more visible to a wider public and give the objects a greater likelihood to be rediscovered by the whole society.

“... Then I started reading blogs, they (Sarvis tableware) are all over the place. People are going crazy about them (laughter).”

Using: Practical Collectibles

Belk (1995: 67) defines collecting as "the process of actively, selectively and passionately acquiring and possessing things removed from ordinary use and perceived as part of a set of non-identical objects or experiences." However, collecting in the current research context does not conform perfectly to Belk's definition. We found that all the collectors believed that their collected plastic items should be useable in their current everyday lives and they therefore often use their collections for daily family dining or for special occasions (e.g. Christmas and Easter dinners). On the other hand, using may also be considered an important practice of value creation.

"I try to collect the kind of things that we can use."

"I like a yellow one, which is nice for example in Easter time; and red one, red is for Christmas and our everyday use."

Experience of Meaning: Happy Childhood Memories and a Part of Local Culture and History

Childhood was mentioned repeatedly by the collectors, especially when they were asked about what this collecting hobby means to them, if they have any stories or dreams associated with their plastic tableware and why a certain item is the favorite.

"Well, I have a couple of items from my childhood home, so I will always remember those being in everyday use."

"I like the memories they give me, the instant childhood memory to me."

Family picnics and spending holiday time in the summer cottage are the most common themes associated with Sarvis by the collectors. These memories or experiences are very positive in terms of their affective tone.

"I remember that when I was a child, with our family, we made many forest trips, and then we always had this kind of red Katrilli cups with us. We used them to drink cocoa".

"Similar plates we had when I was a child. We had them in our summer cottage and my grandfather's home ... I remember it from my childhood, because it was used when we baked the pancakes".

One collector, who lives in Pirkanmaa, where a Sarvis factory used to be located, strongly connected her personal history and the history of Sarvis, and told us:

"Yes, I only collect Sarvis. I'm not enthusiastic towards any other ... because I live here in Pirkanmaa and there used to be a Sarvis factory in the town. I am fascinated by the old history of Sarvis. I want to preserve those objects and collect them, in that way, perhaps, I feel that when I collect those dishes, I collect a piece of history of this area for us."

Although these Sarvis dishes were designed by very famous Finnish designers, none of the collectors mentioned anything about the designers. It seems that the fame of Kaj Franck and Tauno Tarna is not a very important part of experience of meaning for the collectors, rather it is the collectors' happy childhood memories associated with Sarvis that made their collections meaningful to them.

Aesthetic Experience: Various Bright Colors and Simple Shapes

In addition to associated positive childhood experiences, a strong aesthetic preference for the appearance of Sarvis tableware, especially for the Katrilli series, was also expressed by the collectors. The data shows that the collectors particularly like these plastic dishes not only because of the meaning they represent, but also because these dishes fit their tastes. This may be explained by the implicit memory which was formed through heavy exposure to the Sarvis design style during their critical developmental phases (childhood in this case).

"In my childhood, we had these Katrillis in use and also they give me that kind of positive feeling. These are somehow, they are my style."

The various bright colours and simple shapes are the most attractive features of Sarvis products, which clearly showed by the two most influential series of Sarvis dishes: "Katrilli" and "Easy day".

"I like them because they have 'real' colors..." "I never buy transparent plastic cups, I love the colors." "I like their simple look..."

COLLECTORS VS ORDINARY CONSUMERS

Unlike the collectors, data gathered through the interviews with ordinary Finnish consumers (non-collectors of plastic tableware) shows that they tend to care only about the functional factors and economic advantages of plastic tableware and consider plastic products cheap, informal but practical for specific occasions (e.g. forest trip). For them, the old Finnish plastic tableware does not carry much cultural meaning or emotional value, at least so far. When purchasing plastic tableware in the shop, they seldom check which brand is marked on the products that they are about to purchase. When it comes to the relative significance of different brands of plastic tableware, most of the ordinary consumers would clearly recall Tupperware and Orthex before we mentioned Sarvis.

"We didn't use plastic tableware before we had kids. I have only bought during the last years of course as I have small children, so with them, we first used plastic (tableware)."

"When I went to buy the picnic set, I didn't check the brand...it didn't really make any difference whether they were ... what brand it was."

Different Experience of Meaning

All the collectors associate family quality time in their childhood with their Sarvis collections and these experiences are seen as very positive and memorable. In contrast, ordinary consumers associate some minor negative experiences with plastic tableware, especially with the plastic material. They formed this kind of mindset that plastic dishes are only for children and not decent enough for adults. They should never be used on family occasions to serve food for adults, but only used in school or scout camp because they are light, unbreakable and cheap so that children can use them carelessly.

"Maybe they remind me of a little bit negative kindergarten experience, somehow ... children's dishes that never break ..."

Similar Visual Aesthetic Preference

All of the ordinary consumers participating in this study use porcelain tableware in their everyday lives. Though they never thought plastic tableware could be

collectible, most of them consider that certain porcelain dishes produced by Arabia (an old and famous Finnish tableware brand) could be collectibles. Compared to Sarvis and plastic material, Arabia's porcelain dishes have much higher intrinsic value in terms of the material and a much longer tradition in Finnish culture. In addition, brands like Arabia and Iittala (both are owned by Fiskars Group now) have long formed proverbial associations with those most famous Finnish designers (e.g. Kaj Franck and Birger Kaipiainen) and always been sold at comparatively high prices. To some level, their porcelain products may be viewed as something born to be timeless or Durable, and this is exactly what Arabia have been claiming.



Figure 3. Katrilli (up) and Teema (down)

Arabia's *Teema* series was frequently mentioned by four interviewees as the one of their favorite collectible porcelain tableware series. As one of the most prestigious Finnish designs, *Teema* is generally believed to be the best selling Arabia (now branded as Iittala) series of all time. Interestingly, the designer of *Teema* series was also Kaj Franck, who designed the "Easy Day" series for Sarvis, whose student Tauno Tarna, designed the most collectible series of Sarvis – *Katrilli*. A high visual similarity can be found between *Katrilli* and *Teema*: simple shapes and varied colors.

Both of them embodied the design philosophy of Kaj Franck: the very basic geometric forms can perfectly integrate with each other, by the use of which, designers could make a simple, beautiful, functional and flexible system, where the only decoration needed, according to Kaj Franck himself, is color.

No matter how the Sarvis brand is remembered, when the pictures of Sarvis tableware were showed, they were highly recognizable to all the participants and affection for the design styles was almost always expressed. Perhaps this plastic tableware collecting wave has not become strong enough to affect all the potential collectors. We found that two ordinary consumers' interests in Sarvis grew significantly as the interviews progressed, especially after seeing the pictures. At the end of the interviews, they stated that Sarvis is desirable and should be seen as an important part of Finnish design heritage.

"After I really stare at these for a long time, yes, I believe these are treasures and certainly desirable."

DISCUSSION

FROM TRANSIENT TO DURABLE: WHY AND HOW DOES IT HAPPEN?

This paper, through examining a specific Finnish example, explores the phenomenon of obsolete everyday products becoming collectibles, a seemingly

impossible change in the perceived value of objects. The results reveal that the memories of critical personal development periods and nostalgic experiences exert key influences on the object's transfer from Rubbish to Durable status. The emotional value attached to such rediscovered objects can be seen as a nostalgic bond to a great extent. The basic mechanism of the nostalgic bonding process between people and objects is that whereby the object "evokes, symbolizes, instantiates or otherwise captures some sort of lost but still-valued experiences- namely, those associated with a set of pleasurable or at least personally significant memories from the past" (Holbrook and Schindler, 2003:121). Given that personal memory is so important here, we have divided the whole value changing process (i.e. memory formation, provisional oblivion and memory retrieval) to explain why and how it happens.

Memory Formation

The process of an object's transfer from Transient to Rubbish (ordinary use and devaluation process) is equivalent to a memory formation process if we see it from a human perspective, during which users form their memories of the object, including explicit and implicit memories. When the memory formation process ends, it undergoes a permanent or provisional oblivion phase. The object becomes Rubbish and ceases to be visible in the users' lives,

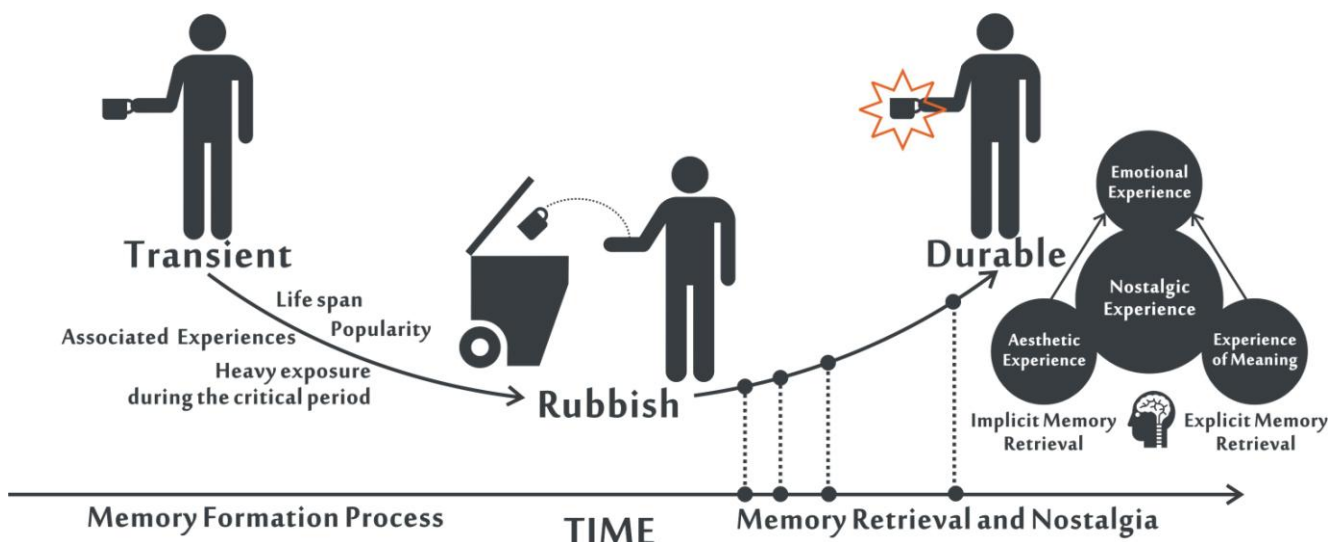


Figure 4. From Transient to Durable: Why and how does it happen?

but the memories of the object, the experiences or stories associated with it stay hidden in the users' minds. The object may subsequently disappear forever or be rediscovered later by people as a Durable object in the market place or their own closets. In the current research, it has been shown clearly that there are two characteristics shared by all the collectors: they associate positive childhood experiences with Sarvis plastic tableware (explicit memory formation) and had heavy exposures to the products during their childhoods (implicit memory formation). This finding may be generalized as: **1) the positive experiences associated with an object and 2) a heavy exposure to the object during one's critical period (e.g. childhood) would positively influence the person to attach a nostalgic bond to the object and emotionally evaluate the object as a Durable item after it has been "Rubbish" for a period.**

At the same time, two factors associated with objects also have important influence: **1) the life span and 2) the popularity.** First of all, in order to form effectual memories with its users, an object needs to be functional long enough before going into the Rubbish category. In terms of a brand, the longevity is also a precondition for the formation of brand memory and the construction of brand heritage. Secondly, if an object was once very popular in a society, it will often have greater potential for being ascribed cultural meaning and rediscovered by wider society as part of a future heritage. For example, Sarvis and its plastic tableware possess both of these characteristics. The brand had a long history and its products were perceived of as high quality and were desired for a very long time. In addition, Sarvis plastic tableware was very much liked by Finns and was ubiquitous in Finland before the 1980s.

Memory Retrieval and Nostalgia

In the last phase, the emotional value of the obsolete object is created and attached through memory retrieval and nostalgic experience. It often starts with an unexpected encounter with the object and carries on as value creation practices such as hunting, displaying, using and discussion. In this process, the person who rediscovers the object could continuously experience nostalgia, from which the positive

emotions are derived. The nostalgic bond between the person and the object would be enhanced simultaneously. As previously stated, explicit memory retrieval would determine the meaning level of nostalgic experience - which personal and cultural meanings and what experiences would be associated with the object. In addition, implicit memory retrieval has a crucial impact on nostalgic preference, a life-long aesthetic preference or taste for the object or certain appearance features of the object.

THE DESIGN INSPIRATIONS

One of the purposes of this study is to explore how this strong emotional value (i.e. nostalgic bond) attached to obsolete objects might be transferred to new designs. However, a new question has emerged at the end of the study – Is it possible to develop a structured design process to transfer it? Perhaps a systemic front-end exploration for each design case, such as the study we report in this paper, is one way to help designers utilize nostalgic bond appropriately. Every design case has its own uniqueness and uncertainties and designers can easily make wrong decisions without understanding these differences sufficiently. In contrast, when doing nostalgic experience-driven design projects, an exploration towards target group's relevant collective and personal memories, as we did in this study, would potentially inspire them to find innovative pathways. We, as design researchers, find that this study has generated a range of new ideas. For example, the Sarvis brand itself is a great fortune, at least in Finland. Because of the saturated market, it is becoming increasingly difficult to introduce new brands to consumers, especially in a mature product category. Many old and once popular brands (e.g. Converse shoes in the US, Forever bicycle in China) have employed culture- and memory-related branding and design strategies to progress from function-oriented to culture-oriented brands and in the process have acquired second lives. Thus Sarvis, a well recognized but dormant brand which has strong brand heritage, cultural meaning and emotional value could probably be recycled successfully. But, a recycled brand alone is not always a guarantee of success. New products need to be designed with both old and new features to retain brand identity as well as fit the new environment and attract a broader target. There

are many ways that designers could achieve this goal. For instance, to inherit the pivotal appearance features of Katrilli for retaining the identity of Sarvis but use some other materials or a combination of plastic and porcelain to produce may be a promising solution. This idea is inspired by the finding that the collector and non-collector share rather similar aesthetic preferences for tableware and the main conflict is that non-collectors have associated some negative experiences and opinions with plastic materials. Besides, the pleasure of “hunting” indicates that a similar retail experience design would also be worth considering as a contribution to the holistic brand experience.

More generally, this study suggests that to probe target users’ memories of critical developmental phases, based on an age- and gender-related segmentation, would help designers to discover inspirational sources for emotional design. However, the concept of critical developmental period is relatively broad. It could be childhood, adolescence or even young adulthood and the age-related preferences for different products peak at different ages (Schindler and Holbrook, 2003). For instance, in the current study, childhood seems to be the critical period for females forming their preferences for tableware, whereas adolescence may be the critical period of males forming their preferences for cars. Different cases should therefore be explored individually. In order to facilitate design ideation and conception afterwards, further research may endeavor to develop a probing tool which could help generate visual outcomes in the exploration process, to enrich the data acquired through interviews. Some important research works on design tool development, such as cultural probes (Gaver, Dunne & Pacenti, 1999) and design probes (Mattelmäki, 2006), could be adapted as the basis for memory probes.

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